

The betrothal proceeds as follows. Having picked a suitable mate for his son, the father discusses the matter with his clan. If the match is approved he collects whales' teeth, mats, bark-cloth, and other property from his relatives. Several men of the clan present a formal proposal, accompanied by the property, to the girl's relatives. The proposal is considered by the girl's clan, which sends a formal answer on the following day. Both the proposal and the answer are frequently in written form today, since many Lauans can read and write the Mbauan dialect. A piece of paper and pencil are used. If the proposal is refused the property is returned. If it is accepted the two children are called by a term which means spouse (*watchi*). Further gifts of property and food are made at intervals to the girl's father by the boy's father. [212]●

The natives say that most child betrothals are consummated in marriage. However, if the young people do not care to marry, either one may break the engagement. In such a case the original gift of whales' teeth and property presented by the boy's clan to the girl's clan, or its equivalent, is returned. However, the food and property, amounting to considerable value, which her relatives from time to time have received from him, are not returned with the original gift.

Frequently the boy would like to free himself of the obligation to marry his betrothed. Just as the tabu on a man's sisters and female parallel cousins stimulates his sexual interest in them, so the accessibility of his cross cousins, especially his betrothed, renders them less desirable. However, he is loath to break his engagement, for if he does so his father and his father's brothers will be very angry because they will lose so much property.

On account of the surplus of women in southern Lau a man can easily secure a wife. If he does not marry his cross cousin he chooses a mate from the many eligible girls on his island or on another. However, a young man is usually reluctant to marry and settle down. After his initiation, life